

July 2016

Brian McGrath gained a Queensland State Government Scholarship to study Civil Engineering at University of Queensland, where he graduated in 1959 with a BE and in 1962 with a BSc.

He spent his working career in three Queensland State Government departments where he rose to the position of Director of Engineering Services and Deputy Director of the Department of Harbours and Marine. He specialised in Coastal Engineering, working with the Delft Laboratories in the Netherlands in 1969 and 1970, co-authoring the landmark Delft report on Gold Coast Beach Erosion. Over his career he authored or co-authored 16 published technical papers. He was awarded the Public Service Medal for outstanding public service to Queensland in the 1992 Australia Day Honours List.

Brian was a foundation member in 1971 of the Engineers Australia National Committee on Coastal and Ocean Engineering, serving thereon until 1980. He was the first engineer on the Queensland Beach Protection Authority and had extensive involvement with facilities for small-craft and wharfage and dredging in the major ports of the State. Since joining the EA Coastal Committee, he has served Engineers Australia almost continuously. He was a member of the Queensland Division Committee for many years, and Division Chairman in 1988.

With encouragement from the late Robin Black, Brian joined the Queensland Engineering Heritage Committee in 2006, and was Treasurer from 2008 to 2014. He became immersed in the Engineering Heritage Recognition Program, notably the Blackall Wool Scour recognition, on which he undertook additional research regarding original equipment and history. He started and co-ordinated the EHQ website and through his enthusiasm and personal invitation encouraged engineers to join and contribute to EHQ.

Brian attended Engineering Heritage Australia national meetings from November 2010 and became Queensland's representative from November 2011. He could always be relied on to contribute and to respond to requests with considered and constructive ideas. One such contribution was a survey and review of the Oral History Program being conducted in EHA Division groups. Under EA regulations his term ended in 2014, but he remained active in EHA National projects. Brian has been a regular contributor to the EHA Quarterly Magazine since its inception. He was a member of the 2015 Magazine Review team which endorsed its production while recommending expansion of the audience. When a recommended EHA Magazine Committee was formalised through the National Committee in 2016, Brian was a natural choice who accepted membership readily. Unfortunately his time on the committee was short when conceding in July 2016 that deteriorating health meant he had to reluctantly submit his resignation.

As with his passion for coastal engineering and engineering heritage, Brian has been a passionate supporter of family and community activities, social justice and the environment. He and Heather have enjoyed their recreational four-wheel driving, particularly their involvement in the Royal Geographical Society where they have regularly organised outback treks.

In retirement, Brian McGrath has made a significant contribution to engineering heritage in Australia and Queensland.